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PROBERS FIGHT DISMISSAL OF SECURITY AID

Would Consider Rusk Action as Hostile

BY WILLARD EDWARDS
[Chicago Tribune Press Service]

Washington, Oct. 21—

tary of State Dean Rusk was placed on notice by Senate investigators today that his dismissal of a veteran state department security officer would be considered a hostile action. Sen. Thomas J. Dodd [D., Conn.], acting chairman of the Senate internal security subcommittee, said that the state department's discharge of Otto F. Otepka, chief of evaluations in the bureau of security and consular affairs, would be "a great tragedy."

Hopes for Reversal

Otepka will lose his \$16,000 job Wednesday unless Rusk cancels or defers action on charges that Otepka was guilty of conduct unbecoming a state department officer. The charges were preferred after Otepka provided information to the Senate subcommittee during a probe of lax security in the department.

Dodd said he was hopeful and confident that Rusk would hold up Otepka's discharge.

"I would consider it a great tragedy if the services of this exceptionally able and experienced security officer—an outstanding public servant—were lost to the government because of what may have been a technical violation of state department rules," Dodd said.

Dodd made the statement after Rusk, during a closed session, told the subcommittee that he would no longer block questioning of government witnesses about security conditions in the state department.

Rusk Hedges on Rules

Twenty-five state department witnesses, scheduled for questioning by the subcommittee, had been directed on Aug. 13 to ignore any summons from the Senate investigators.

Rusk's concession that these witnesses would be permitted to testify was hedged by a stipulation that he would draft a memorandum of conditions under which they could appear. Some subcommittee members believed that a battle over the primary issue—whether government witnesses may testify freely and give information to Congress—had only been postponed.

Rusk, sought by the subcommittee for questioning for many months, during which he evaded an appearance on pleas of pressing problems elsewhere, attended a closed session, and slipped away by a private door to avoid reporters.

Cites Basis for Ouster

Dodd and Sen. Hugh Scott [R., Pa.] gave a version of Rusk's testimony which left some areas of confusion.

Rusk, for example, was quoted as insisting that the state department was not punishing Otepka because he had testified before the subcommittee and given a detailed picture of loose security procedures in his security branch.

Rusk was said to have stated that Otepka was being dismissed because he had furnished classified information to the subcommittee.

Of this contention, Dodd remarked:

"The charge was made that Otepka had given information and documents relating to state department security to Julien Sourwine, counsel for the subcommittee. It would appear that the department looked upon Mr. Sourwine as an unauthorized individual, who may have been acting outside his function as counsel."

Acts for Subcommittee

"The subcommittee members made it emphatically clear that Mr. Sourwine had acted not as an individual but as general counsel. They made it clear, in short, that they would consider the pursuit of this charge against Otepka as tantamount to a continuing prohibition on collaboration with the Senate subcommittee by state department employees."

Otepka had given assistance investigation of William H. Winter to the subcommittee in its inland, former head of the Caribbean desk of the state department, Dodd recalled.

The subcommittee also took action to protect Miss Frances Knight, chief of the passport office, from reprisals for her issuance of passports to Communists. Abba P. Schwartz, administrator of the security bu-

reau, had vowed to fire Miss Knight.

Warned of Ouster

Rusk was told that if any action were taken against Miss Knight, a storm would break in both houses. Miss Knight has been hailed in Congress as one of the government's most efficient officials.

The secretary of state responded by acknowledging that Miss Knight had performed "brilliantly" as a public servant. Scott said the subcommittee was left confident that no action would be taken against her.

"The trouble with the state department," Dodd said, "is

that it is trying to convict the informants, not the defendants against whom we have assembled the evidence. These government employees have a constitutional right to testify."

Dodd said the subcommittee and Rusk were "not in an adversary position."

"We had no row," he said. "Secretary Rusk is a fair man and I think he will give him to take a fair look at the situation. I expect Otepka to be completely vindicated."

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